

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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May 29, 2021

First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

— Lutheran Minister Martin Niemöller

Dear Fellow Marylander:

Hate and hate-related violence has become much too frequent in America. To be sure, this also happens around the world, but America is supposed to be a beacon of freedom and opportunity, not a hotbed for violent extremism.

We do not need to go back very far for examples of how current events trigger alarming events based on latent bias in our communities. After 9/11, we saw the rise of hate against the [Muslim community](#), which led to violence against Muslim Americans. We have seen during COVID-19 a rise of [anti-Asian activity](#), bias and violence. The latest, simultaneous to the recent violence in the Middle East, is a [rise of anti-Semitism](#) with slurs and violence directed at Jewish Americans.

Some of the most flagrant, recent examples include:

- A 29-year-old Jewish man was [punched, kicked and pepper sprayed](#) last week in New York in broad daylight as a group of men yelled anti-Semitic statements about Israel and Jews.
- Synagogues in [Tucson, Ariz.](#), and [Skokie, Ill.](#), have had windows shattered.
- In [Bal Harbour, Fla.](#), men yelled “Die Jew” at a man in a skullcap and then threatened to rape his wife and daughter.

These incidents are compounded by an uptick in anti-Semitic speech online. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) found that there were more than [17,000 tweets](#) between May 7 and May 14 – one week – with some variation of the phrase “Hitler was right.”

They also follow the January 6 [Capitol insurrection](#), earlier this year, where white supremacists and extremist groups proudly displayed anti-Semitic and racist symbols and recited conspiracy theories blaming Jews for the pandemic. Such conspiracy theories have proliferated alongside anti-Semitic stereotypes and images being mainstreamed by some political leaders and public figures.

While these events are shocking, perhaps we should not be surprised. The Anti-Defamation League Global Index on Anti-Semitism, updated in 2019, found that more than 1 billion people – nearly [1 in 8](#) around the world – harbor anti-Semitic attitudes.

Over 30 percent of those surveyed said it was “probably true” that Jews have too much control over financial markets, that Jews think that they are better than other people, that Jews are disloyal to their country, and that people hate Jews because of the way Jews behave.

A full [41 percent](#) think Jews are more loyal to Israel than the country they live in.

The tangible result of such bias: Jews make up fewer than 3 percent of the American population, but the majority of reported religious-based crimes targeted Jewish people and institutions. According to ADL, Maryland reported a [135 percent](#) increase in anti-Semitic incidents between 2019 and 2020. This included “11 acts of vandalism, one assault and 35 cases of harassment.”

Attacks in real life on real people targeted for no other reason than they are Jewish are anti-Semitism plain and simple. There is no excuse or rationale for the violence in any context.

We all need to speak out whenever we see a rise of intolerance and hate in our communities. So I was appreciative when [President Joe Biden](#) stated this past week that *“the recent attacks on the Jewish community are despicable, and they must stop. I condemn this hateful behavior at home and abroad – it's up to all of us to give hate no safe harbor.”*

Thank you, President Biden. It is important that America, once again, has a leader who stands up against hate.

I was proud also of my colleague, [Senator Mazie Hirono](#), a leader in the Asian American community, who posted on social media: *“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again – an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. We all must condemn the*

recent surge of anti-Semitic attacks in our country. Each of us needs to stand up, speak out, and confront this hatred."

Let me also acknowledge comments this week from actor and activist [Mark Ruffalo](#). He has been an outspoken critic of Israel, which is his right under the First Amendment, but he now realizes the true consequences of his words. He tweeted Monday, *"I have reflected & wanted to apologize for posts during the recent Israel/Hamas fighting that suggested Israel is committing 'genocide.' It's not accurate, it's inflammatory, disrespectful & is being used to justify antisemitism here & abroad. Now is the time to avoid hyperbole."*

Yes, words do have serious consequences. If only everyone using such horrendous language, especially those with the biggest megaphones, would understand its impact on others.

As I noted, America is not alone in this current trend. The spread of hateful ideology and recent acts of hate crimes across the globe attests to this.

In my role as Chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission and [Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance](#) for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, I have called for a *Plan of Action* to address violence and discrimination across member nations, including the United States. Circumstances require a more strategic and cross-border approach to addressing hate. I've also supported [initiatives](#) that address security concerns of Jewish communities, including improving relationships between law enforcement, justice institutions, and vulnerable communities; educating communities on anti-Semitism and how to counter it; and building alliances with other communities to counter hate.

Over the past decade, I've also worked to ensure that the State Department's annual budget includes funding for [fighting anti-Semitism](#) and to work globally as allies in the fight against anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim bigotry, hostility toward the LGBTQ-plus community, and other forms of hate.

The United States should be a global leader in fighting such intolerance. It would be hypocritical for us as a nation to preach to the world against hate if we let it fester and grow here at home. Like a virus, as we all know too well, if hate exists in one country, it has the capacity to spread around the world.

I ask you to join me in this struggle against hate. Only by working together can we ensure that compassion, tolerance and understanding win out over fear, hate and indiscriminate violence.

Hate takes many forms. None of them should be acceptable here in the United States of America, or anywhere else in the world.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben". The letter "B" is large and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke that extends to the right and then loops back under the "e". The "e" is written in a cursive style.

Ben Cardin